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ADDRESS

OF

HON. ABEL RAWSON,

BEFORE THE

Seneca County Pioneer Association,

NOVEMBER 6, 1869.

*A. Rawson*

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TIFFIN, OHIO.

STAR PRINTING HOUSE, WHITE & ORWIG PROPRIETORS.  
1869.



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OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF THE  
SENECA COUNTY PIONEER ASSOCIATION,  
TIFFIN, Nov. 8th, 1869. }

ABEL RAWSON, ESQ., *Honored Sir*:—In conformity with the resolution unanimously adopted by the Seneca County Pioneer Association, at their meeting of Saturday, the 6th inst., the undersigned committee would respectfully solicit for publication a copy of the able and masterly address delivered by you before said Association at that meeting. Hoping that you will favor us with a copy, and wishing you health and a long life, we respectfully remain

Your friends and humble servants,

HENRY KUHN,  
JAMES BOYD,  
WM. LANG,  
L. A. HALL,  
BENJ. PITTENGER.

To Dr. H. Kuhn, James Boyd, Wm. Lang, L. A. Hall, Benj. Pittenger, Committee.

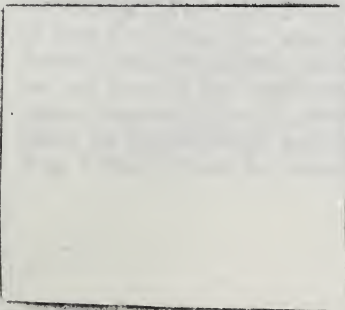
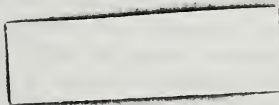
*Gentlemen*:—Your polite note of this morning is received, containing your request for a copy of my late address before the Pioneer Association of Seneca county. I had not intended it for the public eye, nor can I furnish a copy (having no amanuensis) on account of my physical infirmities, but I have concluded to place at the disposal of your Secretary the original, to be used for the purpose indicated, presuming it not improbable that its circulation may direct the attention of the old settlers throughout the county to the importance of adopting suitable measures to preserve the incidents of pioneer life in it.

I am respectfully your obedient servant,

A. RAWSON.

TIFFIN, O., Nov. 8, 1869.

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*Ladies and Gentlemen, Pioneers of Seneca County :*

I meet you on the present occasion depressed by infirmities, which have, like an incubus, for more than a twelve-month beset my pathway of life, and necessitated me to relinquish all physical exertion and mental effort. I must, therefore, bespeak your indulgence for the desultory nature of my present remarks. These will refer to and deal with generalities only, omitting historical details for a work which I had in progress, but have been reluctantly compelled to suspend, and the completion of which is veiled in the unknown future of my condition.

If the gratitude of any Christian people were ever due to a merciful Creator, that gratitude is due to Him from the pioneers of Seneca County for the perseverance and energy; the patient sufferings and endurance which enabled them to exchange the comforts of civilized society and the holy influences of kindred associations, for the self denials of a wilderness and the task of transforming it into cultivated fields and plenteous homes. Man is a strange being, fond of novelty and the perils of romantic or hazardous enterprise. These characteristics are powerful, though perhaps unappreciated incentives to activity; and not unfrequently co-operative, like hand-maids, for his relief from urgent want, if not imperious necessity, without his consciousness of it. Therefore, whatever privations there may be to be endured and dangers to be encountered, such are the peculiarities of his mental constitution, that many of his sweetest enjoyments are derived from successfully combatting indescribable hardships and difficulties for the purpose of reaching some unseen or imaginary goal of his aspirations. Hence the needy, the young and vigorous, who feel that they must be the architects of their own fortune, readily listen to an impulsive inclination, rather than the voice of wisdom, to seek the fields of adventurous enterprise. The first settlers of Seneca County were not an exception to these influences, intensified by the hope of bettering their temporal position. Most seductive and flattering were the fields presented for their occupancy and practical development and reclamation in the wilds of Ohio immediately after the war of 1812. To elucidate this a brief retrospect of the condition of the country at that time; its forbidden aspect and formidable obstacles to improvement on the one hand; and its inducements for settlement on the other—not wholly omitting the enduring fortitude and progress of its pioneers—seem to merit our thoughtful attention on the present occasion.

At the commencement of the present century, and thence until after the war of 1812, between Great Britain and the United States, the north-western part of Ohio, originally subdivided into fourteen, but now including twenty counties, and embracing an area of greater extent than the entire State of Connecticut, was mostly an unbroken forest densely thickened with coppices of underbrush and studded with lofty trees overshadowing with their outspread branches this vast wilderness; and enshrouding its recesses with the pall of a sombrous shade, excepting where intercepted by the rays of light penetrating it at some isolated prairie or small Indian improvement. Among the more majestic of these trees were the black walnut, yellow poplar, oak, elm and ash, which were generally from four to five feet in diameter, at the usual place of cutting, three or four feet from the ground, and below the limbs divisible into from three to four sawlogs, each twelve feet long. The two trees first named were not unfrequently from five to seven





Feet in diameter three or four feet from the ground, and alike free from limbs from sixty to eighty and occasionally ninety feet. The sycamore, although of equal diameter, was shorter below the limbs, and more branching. The cherry, maple and beech, although large, were comparatively of secondary size to the others above mentioned. *And yet the removal of this dense forest, or a great part of it, constituted an indispensable prerequisite to the occupancy of the country for agricultural purposes.* Wild pea-vines, cowslips, browse and native grapes grew abundantly, and supplied plenteous forage to the deer and other herbivorous animals roaming and abiding in this dark and uncultivated wild. The grassy prairies, decked in summer with gorgeous flowers of all hues, were renovated by annual autumnal fires kindled by the Indians. Game of all kinds was superabundant, including diverse species of squirrels, countless flocks of wild turkeys, and other fowls highly esteemed for food. Delicious fish, such as the princely muskelunge, the pike, bass, perch and others, sportively darted and rollicked along in the streams. The furs of various animals were especially attractive for domestic use and their commercial value. The cranberry thrived luxuriantly in the marshes; and the strawberry, raspberry, blackberry and whortleberry grew exuberantly here and there in the "oak openings" and upon the prairies and along the borders of Indian improvements. The plum, crab-apple and grape flourished on the fertile declivities and bottoms along the margins of the streams. The lobelia, gentian, boneset and various herbs less potent grew spontaneously, and were deemed invaluable by the natives, and afterwards highly appreciated, in unprofessional hands, for their medicinal properties. A variety of indigenous fruits, among the most prominent of which were the hazelnut, butternut, beechnut and shagbark, contributed bounteously, not only to the support of wild game, but in the beginning of settlements, like manna to the Israelites, towards the sustenance of domestic fowls and the swine of emigrants.

The surface of the country was rolling, inclined to level with much sameness of contour and general appearance. A considerable portion of it, although high, was so uniform and, in its primeval state, so covered with water most of the time, intercepted in its egress by fallen timber, as to obtain the boorish sobriquet of "Black Swamp." Nevertheless the lofty forest, which grew and flourished even there, stamped conviction on the mind of every adventurer penetrating it that these level and apparently swampy lands were susceptible of easy drainage; and also that the ridges of outcropping limestone intersecting them and not unfrequently covered with butternut, poplar, black walnut and cherry, demonstrated their natural dryness and adaptation, in an eminent degree, to the most profitable agricultural purposes. For the soil, consisting of a deep friable loam or black mould, was underlaid with a substratum of yellow clay, imbued with large quantities of fertilizing ingredients; and must, it could not be doubted when subjected to cultivation, become exceedingly productive. Limestone prevailed almost everywhere; and sandstone, slate and gypsum in certain localities. Good water was abundant, and along the streams, in general, and the Sandusky River in particular, there was a sufficiency of water power for mills and manufacturing purposes. Springs were not infrequent; and where deficient, an ample supply of pure and wholesome water was easily attainable by the digging of wells.

The climate was more genial and temperate than in the same latitude east of the Alleghany mountains. This may perhaps have been caused,



partially, at least, by the proximity of Lake Erie, and the diffusiveness of its vast evaporations, and in part, prior to the drainage and improvement of the country, by the constant and wide-spread exhalations from the extensive forests covering it, if not in a measure by its remoteness and protection from the cold north-eastern gales of the Atlantic. Be this, however, as it may, there can be no doubt that while the earth was protected from the rays of a vertical sun, and the chilly blasts and frosts of winter by fallen leaves, and a dense overshadowing forest constantly emitting its wide-spread vaporizations; the atmosphere was more humid and the climate more temperate, although less salubrious than afterwards, as at the present time, when deprived by drainage of its surface waters and exposed to the influence of the wind and solar heat. At all events, such it was balmy and seductive at the period to which I refer. Everything, soil, climate, locality, timber, game, water, stone, and the assurance of prospective products, in profusion, combined to make the country attractive to civilization. Such was north-western Ohio as originally out spread and robed by the power and munificence of the all-wise Creator; and such it was while in possession of the natives, who for ages had roamed over it, without advancing a single step towards the attainment of intellectual culture, or the domestic comforts of civilization or social life. The Indians, after the memorable victory of General Anthony Wayne over them at the foot of the rapids of the Maumee River, August 20, 1794, punctiliously continued the observance of good faith toward the government and people of the United States until stimulated, about 1809 or 1810 to renewed aggressions upon the border pioneers by the huxters and emissaries of Great Britain.

These and other national wrongs became so provocative and insolent that the United States resolved to submit all differences between her and her rival to the arbitrament of arms; and on the 18th day of June, 1812, she accordingly declared war against Great Britain, in which many of these disaffected Indians participated, and contributed their services in her behalf. *Now mark* that the country around and adjacent to the western end of Lake Erie became the theater of many battles and the scene of ceaseless military maneuvers and operations. The army was consequently compelled, during the three years of the war, again and again, to traverse this region of country; bivouac upon it and become familiar with its adaptation to agricultural purposes. Its vast superiority in these respects over the Eastern and Southern States did not nor could escape their observation. Its convenient access, by way of the Lakes especially, attracted their attention, and by some connecting link between these Lakes and the Hudson River, which had been then already agitated, an outlet for the future products of the soil was assured. By reference to the map it could be reasonably anticipated that the time was not distant when another outlet to the Ohio River would open a southern market and consequently create an active and healthy competition for the products of the country whose fertility of soil, timber, and climate were so highly appreciated. These fascinating allurements were enhanced and fortified by the fact that the State of Ohio, which was not only consecrated to freedom by its own organic law, but also protected by the aegis of the ordinance of 1787, never could be expected to recede from the practical enforcement of the principles it ordained. The soldier on returning from the war to his family and friends among the rocky declivities and rugged hills of New England, New York and Pennsylvania, or the everglades of the South, would naturally recount





the particulars of his eventful service. It may be safely assumed that a country, although mantled in gloom, yet of such native grandeur, and so inviting to emigration, must have been minutely described; and that its advantages for the sure and speedy acquisition of wealth and permanent homes, were vividly portrayed. The exhaustless fertility of its soil; its stately forests; its stone, water and game; its indigenous fruits; its proximity to Lake Erie, and its temperate climate had captivated his judgment. The profusion of its native products; the cheapness of western lands, and their exemption from taxation; and the opportunity it presented for successful enterprise, had inflamed his imagination. These and kindred subjects of reflection, unquestionably constituted the fireside theme of his conversation, daily intensified and embellished by reiteration. This knowledge was not second-hand or speculative, but positive and reliable. His long exposure in the camp in this very wilderness, and his personal observation and experience precluded the possibility of deception. Consequently the desire to possess a country of such wondrous promise could only be satisfied by the acquisition of the object of his affection. But the territory was forbidden ground, belonging to and occupied by several tribes of Indians. This interposed a barrier to its immediate settlement. After the war many of these Indians, still influenced by British emissaries, continued unfriendly towards the United States, which made it indispensable to the enduring welfare of both, and especially to the peace and safety of the contiguous border pioneers, that the rights and possession of the Indians should be extinguished and these lands opened to emigration and improvement. The constant demands upon them for additional grants of land and the ceaseless encroachments on them by ruthless speculators had soured their better nature, provoked their distrust and intensified their jealousy and hate. The disastrous results of the war of 1812 had admonished them of the futility of resistance. They panted, like caged lions, for liberty to roam without restraint and unmolested o'er their native wilds. They were subjugated, humiliated, broken-hearted. Their game was disappearing, they knew not why nor wherefore. They saw, without a gleam of hopeful redemption, the feeble tenure by which they held the homes and country made by the Great Spirit, as they alledged, for them and their children forever. Begirt by civilization and its artistic manhood and superiority, they could do no otherwise than succumb to the inexorable demands of imperious necessity—a necessity, however, which painfully foreshadowed their gradual extinction. The finger of destiny pointed them to the setting sun. That destiny was appreciated by none more vividly than by themselves. But incapable of patient reflection, they had perceived no way to insure self-preservation except by the power of physical resistance. They had in vain tried this expedient in the war of 1812—influenced by their animal instincts and a gross sensuality only, without the benefits of improvement or capacity for improvement in moral or intellectual progress. Endowed with these mental defects, they could not remain pacific nor the border pioneers secure from their stealthy depredations. Under these circumstances, on the 29th day of September, 1817, a treaty was concluded at the foot of the rapids of the Maumee River between Commissioners of the United States on the one part, and the Chiefs of the Wyandot, Seneca, Delaware, Shawanee, Potawatima, Ottawa and Chippawa tribes of Indians on the other part, whereby all their remaining lands within the limits of Ohio, were ceded to the United States. These lands were thenceforth, by



common consent, designated and known by the name of the "New Purchase," and included the present county of Seneca.

With a knowledge of such a country thus acquired, and with the assurance that it could be occupied without interference and depredations from the Indians, it is not singular that the tide of emmigration should have flowed, as it did, rapidly towards it, commencing at once, even prior to its survey and subdivision by the national government. Seneca county, both from its superior natural advantages for agricultural thrift and hopeful returns to which I have cursorily alluded, and its contiguity and accessibility to the "Firelands" and other portions of the State already partially settled, quite naturally attracted the first attention of those emigrant adventurers who sought localities, as squatters, wherever directed by inclination or judgment. These settlements continued during the surveys by the United States, and at the time of the erection of the county by an act of the General Assembly of Ohio, passed February 12th, 1820, to take effect from and after the first day of April next thereafter, the forest here and there was studded with cabins. The gleeful notes of civilization succeeded the war-whoop of savages; and the exercise of christian faith and love, noiselessly, without pallatial palaces or pretentious ceremonials, illumed and cheered the hearts of self-denying pioneers. The surveys being completed, municipal organizations became indispensable, and embryo villages gradually arose to meet the requirements and convenience of the sparsely settled communities. Nevertheless, although our progress was slow and beset with anxious cares, yet we have not, as I trust, unprofitably nor unsatisfactorily devoted our lives to the culture and reclamation of this goodly heritage. We have, most assuredly, no reason to regret the choice made by us when young, active and vigorous, in assuming the responsibility of foregoing the comforts and appliances of civilized society for the purpose of extending its blessings here, and meantime improving our own condition and prospects in life. The present generation, nurtured in the lap of plenty, cannot comprehend the multifarious self-denials unavoidable in settling and subduing a new and wilderness country, nor can they appreciate the practical wisdom it confers, nor the commingled pleasure and pain we feel in reverting to it. Nevertheless a glance at our *duty to preserve some memorial* of our career in the springtime of life, tasked to the utmost by endurance, and alternating, for years, between hope and fear, together with a brief, unvarnished retrospect of pioneer straits and acts of kindness, cannot be wholly devoid of interest to ourselves and our posterity whatever may be its effect on others luxuriating in enjoyments emanating from our early sagacity, labor and toil. I trust that all may appreciate the importance of such memorial and retrospect, and especially at the meetings of this association recount the apparently most trifling minute of our historical reminiscences, for these oftentimes not only form important links in the chain of events, but also constitute the spice that gave variety and zest to our enjoyments. And again in reverting to the toilsomeness and self-denials of pioneer life, it is without vanity or boastful conceit that we claim some credit for our patient zeal and constancy in subduing a wilderness and preparing the way there for a higher degree of civilization. Whether or not, in our transit through life, we have been true to the principles we then inculcated, and have preserved unimpaired the commendable habits we then





contracted and exemplified in our daily walk and conversation, can be determined only by a truthful and unpretentious review and retrospect of the eventful scenes of our lives traced with impartiality and a just appreciation of our condition and the frailties unavoidably incident to our common humanity. This can be done correctly and satisfactorily only by those who were cotemporary with or participated in those scenes; and it is to be regretted that they have been so long neglected. But the demands of a new country and its pinching necessities for many years precluded the possibility of associating for the purpose of gathering up and recording the fragmentary, current transactions of the times. If this association had been established twenty years ago, its accumulations would now have been extensive and almost invaluable. As much, however, has been lost forever from neglect and inattention, it becomes us to collect and preserve what remains. It will not only constitute a nucleus of historical facts, but from their simplicity and off-hand originality of reproduction they will constantly increase in interest and value with the lapse of time. We must have a low estimate of our position and efforts in the world if we can feel such indifference on this subject as to permit the works of our life-time, and, indeed, *such a life-time* to be lost in *end's* night. I trust that such may not be our destiny. Posterity, in general, and our relatives and personal friends in particular, are entitled to the benefits of our example, and to withhold it from them, if not tacitly inferential of epicurean instincts or a willingness to level ourselves with the brute, might at least leave the impression of a disposition, for some cause unexplained, to conceal our real character and conduct. The objects of this association are especially intended to avoid these ill-starred results by exhuming and resuscitating the minor every day incidents of pioneer life in the county of Seneca, and to perpetuate them in some durable form as a stand-point for future research and usefulness as well as individual pleasure. The manner of development here indicated will be sure to carry on its face the impress of truthful and artless simplicity without which the utility of this association will be unavailing if not wholly useless as a basis for historic reference. For history is no respecter of persons; and to be reliable it must embody veritable facts and be free from alloy and without disfiguration. Truth forbids that its record should be marred, and consequently in its delineations of human character and events, it must have its lights and its shades. Whatever may be our private inclination for eclat and self-gratification, the historical developments of Seneca county, however, apparently trifling or ludicrous, if not improper for the public ear, ought most assuredly by each of us, to the extent of his knowledge and occurring within the sphere of his own observation and efficient operations, to be faithfully reproduced with the unvarnished artlessness of originality in accordance with veritable antecedents irrespective of what they ought to have been or might now be desirable. In other words that *facts* ought to be carefully consulted and *events* impartially narrated as they transpired and are enrolled on the page of time. Nevertheless, "to err is human," and it would be singular if amidst the complicated and trying vicissitudes of pioneer life, we had at all times wholly escaped a departure from the absolute rule of right. It is to be hoped, however, and I trust, that none of us have been guilty of the *intentional* infraction of our moral duties, nor become the willing victims of inordinate cupidity or arrogance.



or of a faithless inconstancy tending to relax our intellectual energy, dissipate our morals and impair if not destroy our usefulness by unhinging the fixity of our manly purposes. With many of us *the roll is already made up*, containing the eventful scenes enacted by each of us in the drama of life. By these only, *now beyond the power of revision or emendation*, can we be correctly estimated by posterity; and that estimate must be deceptive if ought be added, withheld or perverted for the purpose of giving color to our real conduct. To do this would be to sin against light and conscience. If we have abused the trust of free-agency with which we were endowed, the fault must be our own; and however much we may now regret it, yet it does not become us to murmur or complain at a truthful exposition of those events which constitute the formation of a character, whether good or bad, we have deliberately made for ourselves. Being the architects of our own happiness or misery, we ought not, as rational and accountable beings, to ask or expect others to excuse or justify our willful aberrations of conduct; for truth and equity are immortal and need no apology, equivocation or concealment. Indeed exposure and publicity are commendable and just, either as incentives to acts of utility; or as partial correctives, at least, against the perpetration of crimes and minor transgressions and violations of duty. Hence the propriety, if not the necessity of reproducing unreservedly and with impartiality all the essentials of our progress. By these means, and these only can it be determined whether or not our presence and painstaking in the world have tended to human advancement in religion, morals and social life; whether or not our exertions have been directed to the improvement and amelioration of our own condition in common with that of others, or to the exclusive gratification of our inordinate love of gain, or indulgence in dissipation or frivolous amusements; and in a word, whether or not we have hid our light under a bushel or let it shine openly before the world, thereby enabling others less intelligent or fortunate than ourselves to receive and enjoy the benefits of our experience and example; or to profit by our mistakes and errors as correctives against temptations amidst the enticements and buffetings of life. The wicked acts of a reputedly good individual are intrinsically no better than those of a reputedly bad individual; and the good acts of a reputedly bad individual are intrinsically as just and commendable as those of a reputedly good individual. They equally deserve notoriety, because alike reprehensible; and yet charity, "which is the bond of perfectness," will direct our attention to individual reputation; and induce, and very properly induce and justify our silence, if not our forgiveness, as occasion may require, in behalf of the transgressor whose motives or mental defects cannot be comprehended when the act of transgression itself cannot be sanctioned, justified or excused. The former is personal involving considerations of innate frailty, irresolution or possible innocence; and consequently invoking our sympathy for fallible humanity. The latter constitutes a *fact* involving in itself a transgression which, as such, (irrespective of the transgressor,) ought not to receive nor can it receive the approbation of mankind, nor evade the Divine scrutiny; nor its author ultimately a just retribution. From these remarks, alike dictated by reason and common sense, it will be observed that the development and detail of *facts* and events truthfully and unreservedly as they occurred, ought to be with us, as members of this association, an all important consideration,





leaving to every one the advantages and disadvantages; the credit and discredit; the pleasure and pain, derivable from the conduct and position which he or she has, from any cause, been induced to assume and occupy amidst the diversified scenes of life. In this connection I need only add my own convictions that the surviving early settlers of Seneca County have nothing to fear from impartial scrutiny; but on the contrary that they can invite it with confidence as to results. And in concluding this part of my subject, permit me to say that the past of Seneca county is full of eventful incidents worthy of preservation. By a concentration of efforts and diligent research on your part, these can be gathered up and put into a durable form. In view of the obligations due from rational and accountable beings to the race in general for its progressive elevation as well as the pleasure it must afford yourselves, this will not, I trust, be treated with indifference nor neglect. As respects myself, I am admonished by age and my waning health, without any reasonable prospects of lasting improvement, that I can promise little personally, indeed nothing in aid of this association: yet my heart is devoted to it and with confidence that by ordinary industry and perseverance, its success will be assured.

Now with a few general remarks as to pioneer life in this county; and the aspirations, duty, patient fortitude, and unselfishness of the pioneers themselves and I have done. Nurtured here from childhood and youth amidst the checkered scenes and exactions of a stern necessity, many of us have spent our lifetime in this city and county. It is therefore not singular, that as pioneers, now lingering on the verge of time, we should feel disposed to retrace our footprints, and carefully recall the events which have transpired here and in which we have, for weal or woe, largely participated. It is however of secondary importance for us to know that there is a city of Tiffin; that it is studded with splendid buildings for private, mechanical and educational purposes; that its streets are macadamized; its streams bridged; and its native wilderness and rusticity reclaimed and converted into the tasteful abode of the arts and civilization. I say that these are comparatively non-essential and of little concernment. But it is of importance to know under what adverse circumstances and by what skill and patient self-denial of its proprietor the city of Tiffin successfully resisted the hydra of unscrupulous efforts to strangle it in its infancy; and also by what means it has, within less than half a century, been metamorphosed from the haunts of wild beasts and savages into its present magnificence. It concerns us to inquire and ascertain the disposition, ability, anxiety and motives of those by whose energy tenacity and good qualities the growth and progress of Tiffin have been effected; by what perversity its public sentiment has been occasionally demoralized or its private morals corrupted; and to what extent these were induced and influenced or modified by the love of display; pure individual selfishness or a spirit of philanthropy. It behooves us to trace those events which, although perhaps unnoticed at the time of their occurrence, culminated in the present resources and appliances for social enjoyment in Tiffin; and to especially heed the progress of its people in wealth, morality, intellectual culture and the arts which have been assiduously fostered by them and their deceased collaborators and absent associates. It also behooves us to recall the trials of adversity that beset them and us in early pioneer life; and with



humility to indulge ourselves in a familiar recital of the expedients adopted, not unfrequently with prayerful solicitude, to overcome them for the improvement of our straitened condition. The trials and tribulations inevitable to the first settlers of every country are countless, poignant and indescribable. The memory, in its efforts to reproduce them, is mistified and confused if not lost in oblivion. Those of the pioneers of Seneca county were not exceptional; but from the nature of its accompaniments and surroundings, they were superlatively trying and laborious. Appreciating this, they worked with a will, alike from necessity, inclination and duty, to improve their lands and overcome the multitudinous and imposing drawbacks to their immediate subsistence and domestic comfort.

The pioneers of Seneca county having sought their homes in the wilderness with singleness of heart to subdue it and improve their own condition and prospects in life, were alike indifferent to the fastidiousness of aristocratic conventionalities, and the allurements and captivating fascinations of the glittering tinsels of wealth. With them it was a season of social equality without invidious rivalry, or as politicians would now say, they were all equal before the law, and it may be truthfully added emulous only "to do unto others as they would that others should do to them." They therefore not only encouraged and fostered each other but especially new comers among them. If worthy and industrious, it was immaterial whether or not they had capital other than labor and moral habits which were then indispensable and constituted the best of capital. Those, and they were rare, who had available means, bought lots or land, constructed buildings and improved the county, meantime by contact and a bland assimilation, blithely participating in the rustic customs and usages if not the pinching wants of their new associates. Every legitimate enterprise was stimulated by private exertions and public encouragement. All cultivated a spirit of mutual help, neighborly intercourse and equality. If any one was sick, unfortunate or unsuccessful in his laudable efforts and in danger of breaking down, he was duly cared for and sustained either by good counsel or material aid as the occasion might require. Instead of being buffeted in his calamity, as not unfrequently happens from envy and pride in a wealthy and pretentious state of society, his misfortunes, if inevitable or blameless, were commiserated and promptly relieved by the community which justly appreciated the loss of his services and talents as being more detrimental than the loss of money. And again the cohesive incentive for reciprocal actions was strengthened if not enforced by the consideration that they might some day need a corresponding sympathy and magnanimous response. All, as if by instinct, spoke encouragingly of the town and county; of the prospects before them; of their progress; of the simplicity, yet unalloyed happiness of their lives; of their goodly neighbors; and everything tending to advance their common weal. It was these little things, then cherished by all, but now too often unseen and unappreciated, that gave vivacity and energy to the infant settlements of Seneca county. It was these that infused the patient pioneer with hope and courage; that gave cheer to his lonely home in a cabin and contentment with a scanty wardrobe. It was a daily increase of the comforts emanating from these that inspired him with an abiding confidence in ultimate success.

The demand for the necessities of life greatly exceeded the home supply. Markets were remote and almost inaccessible. A month, on the average,





was busily occupied by the Tiffin merchant to visit the city of New York, purchase a stock of goods and return. The roads, although deceptively defined on some of the maps, consisted merely of tortuous Indian trails. One entire day especially during the winter and early spring, when the muddy ground for the causes herein previously mentioned, seldom became solidly frozen, was diligently occupied in traveling on horseback from Tiffin to Fremont only eighteen miles and the nearest point of access to the waters of Lake Erie. Mosquitoes and other nauseous insects and reptiles were legion and intolerably annoying. They were at nightfall only expelled and kept off by a suffocating smudge placed windward for that purpose, and now well remembered as a grateful godsend on those occasions. The squirrel and raccoon, the blackbird and crow would ruthlessly despoil their cornfields. The hawk would seize and plunder their domestic fowls. The bear and ferocious panther were oftentimes more familiar than courteous or desirable. The howl of the prowling wolf would not unfrequently chill the blithesome gayety of the terror-smitten pioneers ensconced in their isolated cabin for the domestic chat of eve. Chills and fever were not uncommon, and now and then the *shaking ague*, like some saucy prude, would stir up the bile of its quivering victim, jerking and tossing and torturing him for hours without respite or mercy. The thoughts of a former sweet home and its multifarious surroundings would inevitably return requiring a mighty mental effort to divest them of the forms of reality. But these thoughts were transitory. For nature was bountiful and her assurances visible and convincing. She whispered in their ears "*Patience*. My resources, crude as they are, when developed by your skill and industry, will convert these solitudes into the abode of a moral and intellectual community, beset with churches and schools, all sustained by the munificent products of my soil." This maternal voice, the instinctive promptings of a stern necessity, was cheerfully heeded, and the stately forest wilted like dew before the ax of the stalwart pioneer and his sturdy sons. The goodly wife and her cheery daughters meantime did the honors of the kitchen; superintended household affairs, made clothes for family use; read books eschewing trashy periodicals; fostered a taste for social enjoyments and moral and intellectual culture; and indeed did all these things and more, *robed in domesticity* without the bewitching fascinations of modern corsets or the Grecian bend. At night-fall this weary group congregated in their homely cabin, roughly constructed of logs, with a floor of puncheon and a chimney of billets cemented and plastered with mortar of clay. It was dimly lighted by a small window or two, made sometimes of glass, but not unfrequently of paper. A single door, hung with wooden hinges and fastened with a wooden latch operated by a latch-string of recent political notoriety, furnished a passage for ingress and egress. Now follow me into that cabin, and contemplate this interesting group ministering to the demands of pressing hunger. Behold the purity of its domestic enjoyments. A skillet, bake-kettle, frying-pan and coffee-pot or tea-pot, constitute the principal utensils for cooking. Supper, being already prepared, is spread oftentimes without table-cloth, upon a table of boards or puncheons. The household gather around it, seated in chairs of rudest manufacture, or upon stools or benches provided for the occasion. The head of the family, in mien careworn and benign, pronounces an appropriate benediction. The plain,



yet nutritious meal, bespeaking most perfect cookery and neatness, is disposed of with a will. The labors of the day create a craving appetite, and that appetite is a substitute for those exquisite delicacies which now-a-days induce dyspepsia and a liberal demand for patent nostrums. Supper over and the table and dishes carefully disposed of, the family assemble for the social chit-chat and comforts of eve, around the big fire crackling in the wide and open fire-place. The faithful watch dog sleeps at the door and puss in a corner. The evening is devoted to reading or instructive conversation, alternated with gleeful amusements to which the busy housewife now and then superadds darning and knitting. At bed-time, closing the departing day with devotional service, they retire for the night, reposing on beds made sometimes of feathers, sometimes of straw, upon roughest bunks or bedsteads of domestic manufacture. With heavenly innocence playing upon the countenances of all, they sleep soundly and sweetly until the dawn of another day. Such, briefly, was the daily routine of pioneer life. Their hearts, overflowing with gratitude, pulsed warmly with love for one another, and with still greater love to Him who unseen had conducted them safely, without guile, through the day, and crowned their labors with success. Suffice it to say, that here in the wilderness beyond the pale of social intercourse, all the finer emotions of the heart and love of the benevolent duties of life dwelt in the family circle, however humble that circle might be. The inmates of a palace constructed of marble and richly furnished in oriental splendor, might well envy such dwellers in a cabin, and from them learn that unalloyed happiness is to be found only in innocent blithesome hearts irrespective of wealth or position. Of these adventurous pioneers none were indifferent to the exacting conditions of society. All adopted and daily improved the accumulating means for its amelioration and progressive usefulness. There were no indolent drones, enjoying the benefits of labor bestowed by others, without sustaining his share of the public burdens. The impropriety if not the criminality of inactivity, whether real or affected, was duly appreciated and its votaries were promptly doomed to stoical indifference if not absolute disrespect. Several of these indomitable pioneers built up princely fortunes by their energy and strict attention to their legitimate business, as I hope to explain on another occasion; and they all succeeded beyond their most sanguine anticipations, excepting perhaps now and then a solitary individual, who with supercilious arrogance, awaiting wealth or distinction without effort, frittered away his life-time in the illusions of self-conceit or in dissipation and frivolity. They made roads and farms; created wealth and constructed houses and edifices alike tasteful and commodious. They surrounded themselves and their families with all the appendages and appliances of domestic ease and comfort. They laid deep the foundations of religious culture and social life. They meantime cared for the sick and needy; enforced the laws against vice and immorality fearlessly without looking back for the shadow of popular opinion; and they now constitute, in the aggregate, a community which will compare favorably, in all the elements of an advanced civilization, with that of the pioneers of any other northern county in Ohio. And again what constituted mere abstractions in civilized communities necessarily became the practical rule of every-day life to pioneers. They might have been and probably were from inexpediency, if not necessity, apparently indifferent





to or deficient in some of the amenities of polished society, but not in the warm emotions of the heart—the best guarantee of a confiding friendship and unselfish sympathy. They had emigrated freely from choice—each seeking his own individual profit and advancement; and they had consecrated themselves and were contributing powerfully in the hands of Providence, to the amelioration of their own condition and in preparing the way for the diffusion of religion, morality, intelligence and refinement. Those who have enjoyed every appropriate gratification of taste, and indulged every feeling of affection which the most unlimited sumptuousness confers, cannot be expected to appreciate the anxious solicitude and yearning with which the first settlers looked back upon the land of their childhood, where churches, schools, and all the appliances that minister to our better nature captivated and delighted the imagination. Everything that revived associations of the past and its surroundings was wondrously endeared by time and distance. Those whom they had passed indifferently on the street or highway a thousand times without special recognition were, on entering their cabins to make some simple inquiry for drink or refreshments or about the way further onward, greeted as friends and interrogated with intense inquisitiveness as to their residence, local incidents, acquaintances and destination. Although there might have been but little to communicate yet that little had its precious reminiscences, and served to renew and strengthen the bond of union with those from whom they were remotely separated. It sweetened their musing return to the rustic scenes of life, giving at nightfall a freshness of delight to the meditations of eve; and enchantment in listening to the songsters of the air saluting the dawn. Such were the longings, such the inspiration that nestled in the hearts of these tenants of the wilderness. None but pioneers can appreciate the deep emotions of tenderness to which I have just referred. The contrast between the past and the present; between society and solitude would unavoidably loom up in the mind as if to tantalize the imagination; yet they had a purpose which no comparisons or temporary inconvenience could shake or disturb. The future was big with promise and its redeeming rewards were self-assured. A sober second thought converted this contrast into an element of increased contentment and satisfaction. Hence it is not singular that the temporary privations and sufferings of pioneer life should have become the fundamental source of domestic gratification and comfort. For anticipation operated as an antidote to counteract all impending perils and misfortunes incidental or apparently unavoidable whereby, in the language of the poet, they were enabled

“In these deep solitudes and awful cells  
Where heavenly, pensive contemplation dwells,”

to struggle, for years, with superhuman fortitude, toil, self-denial and endurance amidst miasmatic influences peculiarly deleterious in the early settlement of the county, to improve their condition and secure the higher enjoyments of social life. No wonder that everything meeting the eye of these devoted pioneers and giving prestige of success, should have invoked, as it did, the Divine benediction—testifying their gratitude for the sleepless care and particular providence of the Supreme Being in their behalf, and recalling his many promises of loving kindness to dutiful humanity.













